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# Concerning Diathesis and Related Categories

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CITATION:

山口, 巖. Concerning Diathesis and Related Categories. ことばの構造とことばの論理 : 山口巖教授停年記念論文集 1998: 505-515

ISSUE DATE:

1998-07

URL:

<http://hdl.handle.net/2433/65804>

RIGHT:

# Concerning Diathesis and Related Categories<sup>1</sup>

## Summary

The nature of the Indo-European medial forms is discussed here. It is maintained that the medium is possibly derived from centripetal version of former active language stage of the Indo-European. Though most of its functions are inherited by a new category of reflexive verbs, it cannot be considered as a grammatical category of voice in the accusative language stage, since the opposition of reflexive and non-reflexive verbs does not correspond to the same extralinguistic reality in this language stage.

## 1. Object of the Article

G. A. Klimov's recent achievement of contensive typology revealed many subtle and deeply concealed structural relations among language phenomena. It seems to me that the problem of diatheses (*genera verbi*) is one of these phenomena. In Indo-European comparative linguistics, it is widely accepted that I.E. originally had only the opposition of active and middle voices, and that the opposition of active and passive developed later from the former.<sup>2</sup> Szemerényi's attempt to prove an original active passive opposition based on Chomskian transformational grammar,<sup>3</sup> does not seem very successful. He maintains that the function of the original opposition of active and passive, for example, in *bharati:bharatē*, was replaced by an apparently new opposition of *bharati:bhryatē*, so that the function of the former came to be restricted only to the "secondary function" of intransitivity or mediality.<sup>4</sup> However, this view does not explain the simple fact that not only in Homeric Greek, but even later in the classical period, the synthetic or non-periphrastic passive system is markedly deficient in comparison with the rather complete system of the middle.

<sup>1</sup>これは『人間・環境学』第3巻(1994), pp. 15-21 所載のものである。

<sup>2</sup>E. Schwyzer, *Griechische Grammatik*, I-II, München 1939-1950; Pierre Chantraine, *Grammaire homérique*, tom. 2, Syntaxe, Paris 1963, pp. 179-180.

<sup>3</sup>e.g. Oswald Szemerényi, *Einführung in die vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft*, Darmstadt 1970, The Russian translation, Moscow 1980, p. 270.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 270-271.

In this respect, the author concurs with M. M. Guchman, who asserts that there are many languages which do not allow the expression of *agens* in passive construction. For instance, in Semitic and in many Turkish languages, the construction of the type “Der Brief wurde von dem Jungen geschrieben” cannot be used.<sup>5</sup> Hence she categorically denies the general applicability of the passive transformation; “Dieses spezifische Funktionieren der Passivkonstruktionen gehört zu den Argumenten gegen die behauptete Möglichkeit der ‘Umkehrbarkeit’ bzw. Transformierbarkeit eines beliebigen Satzes mit transitivem Verb aus dem Aktiv in eine Passivkonstruktion.”<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, so far as the function of medial forms is defined as indicating “un procès qui présente un intérêt spécial pour le sujet”<sup>7</sup> and the passive as “une diathèse où le sujet est considéré comme agi”,<sup>8</sup> the traditional view also fails to explain why such a subjective and obscure function of the middle must be considered more essential for a language than the logical clearness of the passive.

## 2. Theoretical Background

It is a contribution of great importance for Russian language study to have discovered that languages can be classified according to this subject-object-predicate relations, and that at least the core of the linguistic phenomena each language has is hierarchically determined by this relation — the term *implication* is used for such phenomena. Some phenomena which accompany certain languages are not directly explicable from the type of language to which they belong. This kind of phenomenon, called *frequentalia*, often can be explained from the relation of another type. It is because of these *frequentalia* that we know the possibility of development of one type into another. That is, they can be interpreted either as the residual phenomena of the past, or as ever developing phenomena foretelling the coming reorganization of the language structure. This theory, now often referred to as *contensive typology*, is a fruit of the long tradition of the Leningrad School of Linguistics, of which G. A. Klimov is one of the most eminent representatives.

According to G. A. Klimov, there are languages, the subject-object-predicate-relation of which is constructed on the basis of the principle of animate/inanimate

<sup>5</sup>M. M. Guchman, “Die Ebenen der Satzanalyse und die Kategorie des Genus verbi,” *Satzstruktur und Genus verbi*, Studia grammatica, Berlin 1976, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup>*ibid.*, p. 14n.

<sup>7</sup>P. Chantraine, *Morphologie historique du grec*, 2-e éd., Paris 1967, p. 288.

<sup>8</sup>*eiusdem*, *Grammaire homérique*, tom. 2, p. 180.

distinction. G. A. Klimov distinguished this kind of languages formerly considered as a variation of *ergative* languages, as a quite different *active* type.<sup>9</sup> The confusion of these types still observed in the West as well as in Japan is owing to their formal coincidence; the person or thing denoted by an unmarked absolute case is interpreted as the subject of the main verb if there is no marked case, and as an object in the presence of the marked case to be interpreted as denoting the subject of an action.

Moreover, these types have in common some peculiar features; for example, they have no passive voice, make grammatical agreement primarily with absolute case, and the same action can receive different lexical expressions according to its relation to animate or inanimate beings. However, the verbs of ergative languages are mostly grammatically divided into ergative verbs (most semantically transitive verbs and some intransitives), and absolute verbs (to which belong most stative verbs), whereas verbs in active languages are classified into verbs denoting actions of animate beings and those denoting the states of inanimate things.

G. A. Klimov himself summarizes the characteristic traits of the active type as follows. "The regularities of the active type lexical structure determine the functioning of the whole set of the specific features on the other levels of language. Its lexical structure is based on the principle of dividing nouns into active and inactive classes and the corresponding principle of dividing verbs into active (verbs of action) and stative (verbs of state) groups. Both of these groups of words form so-called 'covert' categories. The structure of the active type clearly bears out the general thesis on the priority of lexicon over grammar. The active participant of a situation is almost always expressed by an animate referent, whereas the inactive participant is more often expressed by an inanimate one. These two noun classes differ from each other in their morphological potentialities too. Everything aforesaid permits to identify names of persons, animals and plants with the active class of nouns, and all other names — with the inactive one. Active verbs denote actions, motions, events, while stative verbs denote states and qualities. . . a particular group of verbs denoting involuntary actions and states, lack of verbs especially intended to express subject-object relationships (e.g. *verba habendi*), an opposition of inclusive and exclusive pronouns".<sup>10</sup> This means that the distinction of these types consists not in formal identity of syntactic relations, but in semantic difference, expressed mainly by the way of dividing verbs

<sup>9</sup>Concerning the history of investigation of active languages cf. Chapter 1 of G. A. Klimov's *Typology of Active Languages*, *Типология языков активного строя*, Moscow 1977; *eiusdem*, *Типологические исследования в СССР, 20-40-е годы*, M. 1981.

<sup>10</sup>G. A. Klimov(1977), pp. 314-315.

into classes. Active languages do not distinguish transitive and intransitive verbs. Hence in principle they cannot have a verb *to have*, for example, because it is but a transitive counterpart of the verb *to be*.

### 3. Diathesis as a Grammatical Category

It may be obvious from the above discussion, that this type of language has no passive construction in the sense of most modern I.E. languages, since the marked active case is by no means neutralized as to its positive stand toward the action of the predicate verb. In the accusative type of language, the accusative case is usually marked, because it undergoes some influence from outside, whereas the nominative case can be considered unmarked in that the object denoted can be both actor and recipient of an action. In my opinion, this fact offers a basis for the passive construction in these languages. Nevertheless, these circumstances do not mean that the opposition of diatheses does not exist in active languages. For example, it has been often reported that within the class of active verbs of these languages, the opposition of so-called *extrovert-introvert* or *centrifugal-centripetal*, (or rather *non-centripetal-centripetal*) *contrast/version* is often observed; the *extrovert* form functions to denote that the action of a verb goes out of semantic subject while the *introvert* form functions to denote action to remain within it. *e.g. to take fire/to burn, to go/to lead, to be bitten/to bite* etc.<sup>11</sup> At first glance, this may seem to be an opposition of transitive and intransitive verbs, but as the author asserts on the basis of Navaho,<sup>12</sup> this opposition does not always coincide with the semantic distinction of transitive and intransitive verbs.<sup>13</sup>

This suggests that the opposition of this version is somewhat different from the opposition of transitivity and intransitivity. The centripetal version, a marked member of opposition, seems to express something like an emotional affectedness of the logical subject in active case or its special interest to the action denoted by the predicate.

Here arises the question of whether this kind of *version* can be interpreted as denoting grammatical diathesis or not. G. A. Klimov seems to consider it self-evident when he says, "At the same time it is an extraordinary remarkable feature of the

<sup>11</sup>G. A. Klimov(1977), p. 140.

<sup>12</sup>E. Sapir, H. Hoijer, reported by E. Sapir and H. Hoijer, *The Phonology and Morphology of the Navaho Language*, Univ. of California Publications in Linguistics, vol. 50, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1967, p. 92.

<sup>13</sup>G. A. Klimov(1977), p. 140, Диатеза незалогого характера.

morphology of the active verb, which clearly makes it different from the transitive verb in the languages of the ergative type, that in it functions a specific diathesis of the character different from voice".<sup>14</sup>

Recently, Russian linguistics has widely acknowledged the idea that the distinction of active and passive voices is but one special variation of diatheses in general. The use of *zalog* is gradually coming to be restricted to this variation, although the definition of the term diathesis itself is not very clear.<sup>15</sup> Most traditional definitions are based on the relation between the subject of the sentence and its predicate. For example, B. Havránek sees the category of diathesis in the change of relations of a verbal action to its subject, or in general to the sentence construction.<sup>16</sup> In this case the category of diathesis becomes too wide and includes many lexical categories, like the opposition *do, act* etc. against *undergo, suffer* etc., sometimes referred to as *lexical passives*.<sup>17</sup> However, recent investigations support the opinion that categories other than the opposition of active/passive voice should be excluded from the category of diathesis.<sup>18</sup>

In my opinion, if we can speak of diathesis when one and the same state of affairs in extralinguistic reality can be rendered linguistically in two different ways as regards subject-object-predicate relation,<sup>19</sup> no doubt the extrovert/introvert version

<sup>14</sup>G. A. Klimov(1977), p. 140. В то же время чрезвычайно яркой чертой морфологии активного глагола рассматриваемых языков, резко обособляющей его от транзитивного глагола языков эргативной типологии, является функционирование в нем специфической диатезы незалогового характера. Семантика противопоставляемых ее посредством глагольных словоформ принципиально отлична от содержания оппозиции действительного и страдательного залогов.

<sup>15</sup>J. Veyrenc distinguishes four notions according to the level of analysis: Diathèse (fondamentale/dérivé[s]) on the niveau syntaxique, Voix (active/passive) on the niveaux morphologique, Genus verbi (extraversif/introversif) on the niveaux sémantique and Rection (transitive/intransitive) on the niveaux syntagmatique. cf. Diathèse et constructions pronominales, *Études sur le verbe russe*, Paris 1980, pp. 224–227.

<sup>16</sup>"Grammatickou kategorií rodovou vidím tam, kde se za stejného významového obsahu (věcného, intelektuálního mění vztah slovesného děje k subjektu nebo vůbec ke konstrukci větné." B. Havránek, *Genera verbi v slovanských jazycích*, I, Praha 1928, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup>С. Е. Жахонтов, Конструкции, называемые пассивными в китайском языке, Категория залога, *Материалы конференции*, Л. 1970.

<sup>18</sup>"...Passiv, Reflexiv/Medium und Kausativ sich nicht, wie oft angenommen wird, als Glieder einer Kategorie, der des Genus verbi, sozusagen auf einer Ebene gegenüberstehen." R. Löttsch, W. Fiedler, K. Kostov, Die Kategorie des Genus verbi in ihrem Verhältnis zu einigen verwandten morphologischen Kategorien, *Satzstruktur und Genus verbi*, Berlin 1976, p. 94; cf. also B. С. Храковский, Теоретические аспекты концепции диатез и залогов, *Залоговые конструкции в разноструктурных языках*, Leningrad 1981, pp. 36–38.

<sup>19</sup>From among the earlier works, we can quote A. Marugulíes's definition, according to which "das Genus verbi bezeichnet das Verhältnis der Verbaltätigkeit zu dem sie produzierenden Subjekt, gleichzeitig aber auch das Verhältnis dieser beiden Faktoren zu einem gegebenenfalls hinzutretenden Patiens (Objekt), auf welches das Agens (Subjekt) die Verbaltätigkeit richtet". cf. A. Margulíes,

must be considered as a diathesis. Since in this type of language the distinction of intransitives and transitives does not exist, such distinction is logically indifferent for the speakers of these languages except for the difference in linguistic expressions.

#### 4. Proto-Indo-European as an Active Language

In the course of studying contensive typology, the Leningrad School has hypothesized that I. E. developed from an active type of language. According to the late A. V. Desnitskaja (1912–1992) (not well-known in Japan but one of the outstanding figures in I. E. linguistics), S. D. Katsnel'son first distinguished "real ergativity" from "residual ergativity," which led him to the idea of typological development.<sup>20</sup>

Study of the ergative past of I.E. has since become his main theme.<sup>21</sup> According again to A. V. Desnitskaja, this point of view was then shared by M. M. Guchman, although she later took sides with G. A. Klimov. As a result of many investigators gathered mainly around The N. Ja. Marr Institute of Language and Thought in former Leningrad, G. A. Klimov's *Essay of the General Theory of Ergativity*<sup>22</sup> and *Typology of Languages of Active Structure*<sup>23</sup> appeared in 1973 and in 1977 respectively. The late A. V. Desnitskaja highly esteemed these works, saying "Studies of G. A. Klimov on the theory of ergativity and on the special type of expression of subject-predicate and subject-object relations, which he called an 'active type,' made a new epoch in the study of historical typology of the type of sentence, which influenced the solution of problems related with prehistory of the nominative (i.e. accusative) type of Indo-European languages".<sup>24</sup> T. V. Gamkrelidze and V. V. Ivanov's attempt to make a thorough revision of the Indo-European comparative grammar from the typological point of view can be considered a new extension of this line.<sup>25</sup>

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*Die Verba reflexiva in den Slavischen Sprachen*, Heidelberg 1924, pp. 10–11.

<sup>20</sup> С. Кацнельсон, *К генезису номинативного предложения*. Л. 1936, p. 103, cited from A. B. Десницкая, Вопросы типологии предложения и проблема происхождения номинативного строя индоевропейских языков в исследованиях советских лингвистов 30–40-х годов, в кн. А. В. Десницкая, *Сравнительное языкознание и история языков*, Л. 1984, p. 15.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>22</sup> *Очерк общей теории эргативности*, М. 1973.

<sup>23</sup> *Типология языков активного строя*, М. 1977.

<sup>24</sup> A. V. Desnitskaja, *op. cit.*, p. 44

<sup>25</sup> Т. В. Гамкрелидзе, Вяч. Вс. Иванов, *Индоевропейский язык и индоевропейцы*, Тбилиси, 1–2, 1984.

### 5. History of Investigation of the I. E. Active Past

The argument in T. V. Gamkrelidze and V. V. Ivanov's work starts from the premise that the I. E. languages have developed from the active language type. This is not self-evident to foreign students, therefore, we may need to take short glimpses of the history of the discussions.

According to A. V. Desnitskaja, in the thirties and forties in the former Soviet Union discussions took place regarding the ergative past of the I.E. languages. This gave rise to two different groups — the so-called *ergativist* group and the *anti-ergativists*, including A. V. Desnitskaja. This controversy was finally settled when G. A. Klimov pointed out that there is a third type of language different from both ergative and accusative types. From this standpoint, she tried to study the role and functions of the accusative case which characterizes the accusative type of modern I.E. languages.

As she put it, "Indo-European accusative case, as the grammatical form of direct object, is one of the rings of the chain of a certain system of grammatical categories, which include also the category of transitivity-intransitivity of the verb and the category of diathesis. At the investigation of problems concerning ways of its birth must be therefore taken into consideration all the complex of phenomena, and especially the historical character of the category of verbal transitivity must be settled. Without this category the direct object of verbal predicate is unthinkable".<sup>26</sup>

These circumstances led her to the study of the accusative case in Homer's *Iliad*, basic conception of which was published as early as 1948. Part was contained in her work entitled "Towards the history of the development of the grammatical category of the accusative case in Indo-European languages (Functions of accusative case in the language of Homer's *Iliad*)".<sup>27</sup>

In this article, she examines the uses of the accusative and observes "characteristic features peculiar to the Old Greek in the use of the accusative case and in the relation itself of verbal transitivity with intransitivity, which show marked fluidity in comparison with the modern Indo-European languages we know, together with the absence of the category of passive voice, tells us that we deal here with a somewhat different system of these categories, somewhat different interrelationships of gram-

<sup>26</sup> A. V. Desnitskaja, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>27</sup> К истории развития грамматической категории винительного падежа в индоевропейских языках. Функции винительного падежа гомеровской «Илиады», в кн. *Сравнительное языкознание и история языков*, pp. 81–124.



matical categories”.<sup>28</sup> She concludes “The decisive moment of this type of use of the Greek accusatives consists in its function to express the nearest modification of the feature (denoted by a main word — I. Y.) without regard to whether it is expressed in the form of an adjective, a participle, or a finite form of the verb. At the same time, we have no reason to speak here of a syntactic government in the common use of the term. The correlation of an accusative with the corresponding form of a verb, participle or adjective is free (i.e. not bounded), but at the same time sufficiently close, for the nearest modification is expressed by means of this accusative, as if fusing with its ‘governing’ word into an entire notion (*cf.* the non-articulated form ποδώκης)”.<sup>29</sup> This kind of usage is already well known. For example:

1. accusativus limitationis with a verb denoting emotions:

γέγηθε δὲ τε φρένα ποιμήν (Θ, 559)  
 “rejoiced at heart (acc.) the shepherd.”

2. with an adjective of the same root:

γηθόσυνος χῆρ (Σ 557)  
 “joyful at heart (acc.).”

3. with participle:

πατρός φίλου ὀφιν ἀτυχθεῖς (Ζ 468)  
 “he-was-amazed at-the-countenance (acc.) of (his) loving father.”

4. with medio-passive form:

θρυλίχθη δὲ μέτωπον ἐπ’ ὀφρύσι (Ψ 396)  
 “he-was-crushed(hurt) the-place-between-eyes (acc.) on the-brow.”

5. accusative of cause:

σύ δὲ κεν καχὸν οἶτον ὄλῃαι (Γ 417)  
 “thou shalt die by an evil fate.”

## 6. Diffused Nature of the I. E. Verbs

As for the opposition of transitive and intransitive verbs, A. V. Desnitskaja maintains that “Therefore, we find in the Old Greek a whole system of the remnants of the time when the language did not know the differentiation of verbs into transitives

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 95.

and intransitives. Themes of verbs were in this respect neutral, absolute, and therefore allowed twofold interpretation of their semantic use depending on the context of a sentence" (The Category of Transitivity of the Verb,<sup>30</sup> an abridged variant of which was first published in 1951<sup>31</sup>).

Apart from the foregoing argument about the nature of the accusative case, her argument is based on the fact that the older layer of so-called second (or root) aorists often preserves "intransitive" meanings, while comparatively newly constructed sigmatic aorists often bear "transitive" ones;

e.g. ἔδυν ("to sink" second aorist of δύω "to sink/to cause to sink"): ἔδυσα ("to make sink", sigmatic aorist); ἵστημι "to stand/to make stand": ἕστην (second aorist) "to stand": ἕστησα; σβέννυμι "to quench": ἔσβην (second aorist) "to be quenched": ἔσβησα (sigmatic aorist) "to quench".

Also, the older layer of so-called second perfect is often used in intransitive meaning in contrast to the new forms of "regular" or first perfect;

e.g. ἐγείρω "to awaken": ἐγρήγορα (perf. II) "to wake": ἐγήγερχα (perf. I) "to be awake"; φθείρω "to destroy": ἐφθορα (perf. II) "to be destroyed, perish": ἐφθαρχα (perf. I) "to destroy".<sup>32</sup>

On the basis of these observations she concludes that "The Old Greek system of diatheses, constructed on the opposition of 'neutral' and 'subjective' nuances of the action (so-called 'active' and 'medium'), also in origin had nothing common with the differentiation of transitive versus intransitive use of the verb. And direct objects in the accusative could accompany medial forms although in the process of decomposition of this system, medial forms come to acquire absolute or intransitive meanings to some extent." And she further insists that the impossibility of using medial forms in transitive meaning, derived as a consequence of this process, enabled the appearance of the passive voice.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Категория глагольной переходности, в кн. *Сравнительное языкознание . . .*, pp. 124–138.

<sup>31</sup> А. В. Десницкая, Из истории развития категории глагольной переходности, в кн. *Памяти акад. Л. В. Щербы*, Л. 1951.

<sup>32</sup> The problems concerning I. E. perfect and medium were also the main theme of "The Proto-Indo-European and the Greek verb" published by I. A. Perel'muter. cf. И. А. Перельмутер, *Общеиндоевропейский и греческий глагол*, Leningrad 1977. Although this is the year of G. A. Klimov's monumental work, the author seems not to have been acquainted with it, or at least was not of the same opinion with G. A. Klimov. The opposition of transitivity and intransitivity was taken as an axiom, which seems to prevent him from getting results worthy of his erudition.

<sup>33</sup> А. В. Десницкая, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

From these arguments I am certain that she saw in the opposition of active and medial voices the former opposition of centripetal and centrifugal versions. Medial forms seem to be destined to decline by this conversion in the interpretation of the function of old versions giving way to the new opposition of active and passive voice.

## 7. Reflexive Verbs

Reflexive verbs resemble medial forms in lexical composition and diversity. So it might be imagined that reflexive verbs directly derived from medials. Lexical coincidence of the Greek media tantum with reflexiva in modern I.E. languages has been often pointed out. For example, I. A. Perel'muter asserts that "the most typical groups of medial verbs in Greek are completely comparable as regards their meanings with many reflexive verbs of the Russian, those of the Lithuanian, and pronominal verbs of the French languages. In our opinion, there is no serious reason whatever to doubt that the reflexive function of medial forms came into use as the starting point to give birth to those types of the Old Greek deponentia".<sup>34</sup> (However I cannot agree with him that the original function of I.E. medium was to denote reflexivity<sup>35</sup>). Hence the question arises, what should compel the language to recover the vanishing category of medium by means of reflexives. However, I shall not discuss this problem here,<sup>36</sup> but confine myself to the question of whether this category belongs to diatheses or not.

Reflexive verbs have functions comparable to those of the centripetal version. The centripetal version can be considered as belonging to diatheses in the active languages, in which no distinction is made between transitive and intransitive "actions." But this does not mean that the centripetal version can be treated as a diathesis in the accusative languages too. Since the diathesis of the verb is defined as a grammaticalized linguistic expression of the *same* extralinguistic reality, then the difference of verbal versions is conceived by the speakers of accusative languages as corresponding to different extralinguistic realities: e. g. the state of affairs denoted by "to be", "to go", "to die" is conceived of quite different from "to have", "to carry", "to kill". The same reasoning can be applied to show why reflexivity also cannot be treated as

<sup>34</sup>И. А. Перельмутер, Индоевропейские истоки древнегреческого медиа и категория переходности в структуре предложения, *Структура и объем предложения и словосочетания в индоевропейских языках*, Л. 1981, pp. 97-99.

<sup>35</sup>*ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>36</sup>On reflexive verbs in Russian cf. Н. А. Янко-Триницкая, *Возвратные глаголы в современном русском языке*, М. 1962; D. Paillard, *Voix et aspect en russe contemporain*, Paris 1979.

diathesis in accusative languages.

I am very grateful to my colleague Dr. Carl Becker, who kindly revised my English and gave me useful suggestions.

1994.1.11

### 相とその周辺

印欧語の中動相は印欧語が未だ active language であったときの、求心相から発達したと考えられる。この言語段階では他動詞と自動詞は区別されておらず、従って求心相と非求心相（たとえば「死ぬ」と「殺す」、「行く」と「運ぶ」）は同一の行為の相異なる言語的表現に過ぎなかった。従ってこれは文法的な相の範疇で有り得たが、原始印欧語が accusative language に発展し、他動詞と自動詞が相異なる行為を示すと観念されるに至ったとき、中動相はその存立の基盤を失い、消滅の道を辿ることになったと思われる。

中動相の多くの機能は再帰動詞によって継承されたが、accusative language の段階においては、これはもはや「同一の言語外現実」を表すものではなくなったために、もはや文法的な相を形成することはできず、単なる語彙的範疇にとどまることになったと考えられる。